



United States Department of Agriculture
Forest Service
Siskiyou National Forest
26568 Highway 199
Illinois Valley Ranger District
Cave Junction, OR 97523

United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Medford District
Grants Pass Resource Area
3040 Biddle Road
Medford, OR 97504



Reply To: FS 1950, 2400
BLM: 1792

Date: June 9, 1999

Dear Neighbor and Interested Citizen,

The Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) are planning projects on public lands in the East and West Fork Illinois River watersheds. These projects are titled the Upper Illinois River Landscape Management Projects. We are sending you this letter because you live or own property near the project areas, have been previously involved in projects planned in the vicinity, have a special interest in this area, or have requested to be informed about projects of this type.

We are preparing a joint Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to evaluate site-specific project proposals and alternatives for BLM and Forest Service management within the watersheds of the East and West Forks Illinois River. A joint EIS will allow us to be more informed and make better decisions.

The BLM Medford District's Resource Management Plan, the Siskiyou National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, and the Northwest Forest Plan will guide project development. These plans provide direction concerning resources on Federal Lands. These plans provide the context, objectives and constraints that we will work under in planning the projects to be presented in this EIS. Many resource allocation decisions were made in these plans, decisions that will not be revisited in the present project planning and EIS work. Copies of these plans are available through branches of the Josephine County library system. The Northwest Forest Plan can also be found on the Internet at www.or.blm.gov/ForestPlan/NWFPTitl.htm.

At this point we need your comments on the Upper Illinois River Landscape Management Projects Proposed Action. The enclosed proposals represent initial proposals and will be refined as additional analysis and fieldwork continue throughout the summer. The BLM and Forest Service Proposed Actions accompany this cover letter, along with vicinity and site-specific location maps. These projects integrate both Agencies' Proposed Actions using common objectives, landscape management direction, and language. However, differences of management direction do exist. For this reason, separate Proposed Actions are presented.

We need your site-specific comments regarding the Proposed Actions. We formed the Proposed Actions based on ecosystem management principles. The Proposed Actions are described in detail within the enclosures. The Proposed Actions represent initial proposals. We will develop additional ways (alternatives) to implement the project based, in part, on your comments about the Proposed Action.

Our Purpose and Need for this analysis is to direct management direction in the Upper Illinois River planning area and focus on a variety of natural resource and human (social/economic) needs consistent with the Northwest Forest Plan. The following lists different needs intended to satisfy management plan direction:

- Establish and maintain healthy and resilient ecosystems and watersheds.
- Meet and maintain Visual Resource Management Objectives.
- Achieve and meet Aquatic Conservation Strategy Objectives, high water quality, and productive fisheries within the project areas in the long-term.
- Implement vegetation management treatments that maintain or improve forest health.
- Harvest timber to meet the demand for wood products.
- Manage and/or restore unique wildlife or botanical habitats.

After we determine issues and develop alternatives, we will then compare the environmental effects of the Proposed Action and each of the alternatives. We will compare the potential effects in a draft environmental impact statement. Following public comment on the draft EIS, we respond to comments in a final EIS. At that point a decision can be reached on how or whether to implement the Upper Illinois River Landscape Management Projects. Due to differences in appeal and protest regulations, both Agencies will issue their own Records of Decision.

You may have previously received the Forest Service's Proposed Action on the Elder Trail Timber Sale Project. We will use issues and concerns developed from the Elder Trail Project in conjunction with other BLM and Forest Service projects within this EIS. The Forest Service will also consider future projects such as the King Fish and Cougar Ridge Timber Sales which are possible projects during the next five years within the East Fork Illinois River Watershed.

We invite written comments specific to these Proposed Actions. Any comments regarding possible impacts to individual's civil rights, which are associated with these proposals, are also encouraged. Early comments are especially helpful to us. Comments will be most effective during the scoping process if received by July 12, 1999.

In addition to this initial scoping opportunity on the Proposed Actions there will be a formal comment period for public comment on the Draft EIS. Other opportunities for public involvement will occur throughout the analysis process. These may include formal public meetings, Internet access, new releases and possibly field trips. Notification of these activities will be forthcoming as they are developed.

If at any time over the next few months you would like more information or would like to talk about the projects, please feel free to contact either Agency. The Forest Service contact is Joel King, Illinois Valley District Ranger, at 592-2166, or Peter Gaulke, Environmental Coordinator, at 471-6758. The BLM contact is Doug Parker at 770-2303 or Frank Hoeper at 770-2390.

Please send your written comments to us at the above addresses or you can E-mail them to us at

bkorfhag@or.blm.gov or jking/r6pnw_siskiyou@fs.fed.us.

Under the Freedom Of Information Act (FOIA) names, addresses and comment letters received from individuals and organizations who comment on Forest Service and BLM projects are available upon request. Anonymous comments will be accepted, but if someone comments anonymously, they will not have standing to appeal or protest the project once a decision is made.

Thank you for your interest in public land management activities within the East Fork and West Fork Illinois River.

Joel King

JOEL KING

District Ranger

Illinois Valley Ranger District

Siskiyou National Forest

Robert C. Korfhage

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Grants Pass Field Manager

Medford District

Bureau of Land Management

Enclosures